NPS Firewise Programs

Facilitator: Scott Sticha
Panelists: Morgan Miller, Alaska Region
*   Barb Stewart, Northeast Region*

Barb Stewart
According to Barb, there are two ways to have success of the Firewise Program
1. Bring it to the attention of your regional director.
2. Present workshops.

Last year she had been unable to fully brief her FMO on her work with Firewise because it was the middle of the fire season and her FMO was not available. In order to do the workshops correctly, she had to obtain support from the local fire department and other involved agencies. In the East it also meant having a good understanding of the various zoning regulations of the area's communities. She is gaining the support and momentum of the other agencies and has recently completed a display on the Firewise program that has been well received.

Morgan Miller
Morgan noted that 2.29 million acres burned in Alaska in 2002 and that in those fires 4-5 cabins burned and more were threatened. Firewise workshops were held in Kenai in 2001 and she is helping plan for one for Fairbanks in May 2003. Due to the independent nature of Alaskans, challenges include the distrust of government and the widespread isolation of Alaska.

A core group involving NPS, BLM the State of Alaska, emergency services and local Law Enforcement developed a steering committee that sent letters to community leaders across Alaska inviting them to the workshop. They also developed and mailed out fliers that were specifically targeted towards Alaskans and solicited Alaska-specific speakers for the workshop. The NPS sponsored community members by paying for their travel and lodging for the workshop.   The thought is that these people were community leaders that would take the Firewise message back to communities. The goal for the workshop was 100 individuals and they are already receiving RSVPs. Morgan's lessons learned included:
- Start early;
- Develop and stick to your budget;
- Target specific audiences; and
- Invite them and to think beyond the workshop.